

Monday, November 24, 2008

A-Nuc Book/Nuc Memoir/Nuc Book/Dreamthoughts

Madness of Nations

Dream: I'm reading something, and begin to think of the nuclear plans and programs that Kennedy inherited in 1961. I begin to cry. Robert and Michael see this; Patricia is also there. I say, "I can't think about this without crying." I feel the combination of heavy weight—fatigue--and floating, that I associate with crying in dreams (and waking).

I tell them: "Kennedy might have changed this [on discovering the lack of a missile gap, or its existence, in our "favor"]. But he would have had to make it the single priority of his administration. And that's just not normal." I reflect: he would have had to educate the public [and his elites!] on the realities of the planning, and of nuclear weapons. No president has ever chosen to try this [certainly, no campaigner.] He would have to issue revelations like Khrushchev's 1956 speech on Stalin.

I say to the boys, "A big obstacle to doing this is, *how could you reveal the truth about this without exposing and condemning your predecessors and most of your own supporters as dangerous criminals, as people who should be confined to the mental wards of prison hospitals?*"

[Amnesty, "compassion" for them, on the Nietzsche principle that they were part of a group, a nation-state, an elite crowd?]

[I tell Patricia, on waking, what Rhodes says about the effects of this speech on the worldwide Communist movement; and on Gorbachev. But even Gorbachev admits, it didn't change his devotion to the system, it only exposed Stalin as a monster. Yet, thirty years later, when he felt "We can't go on like this," his major instrument was glasnost.]

A little later in the dream I'm explaining to a woman, perhaps an agent, what my book is about. She is closing an office, there isn't much time. I mention, "*national madness; conventional madness.*" [Book titles?] I quote Nietzsche: "Madness is the exception in individuals; in groups, nations, epochs, it is the rule." MADness.

[Misleading; because the operating principle in the US was never MAD, mutual assured destruction—perhaps not in the SU either. That was neither the aim nor the perceived reality, the expectation, at least for the Air Force (perhaps it was both, for McNamara and JFK, with reason.) Plans and alert forces were always based on the assumption that mutual, total destruction was not assured; that it could be avoided, or at least lessened, by preempting: that striking first was tangibly safer and less self-destructive relative to being struck first or compared to the destruction that could be inflicted or threatened on the opponent being struck. The TOTAL destruction of the country striking first was not assured; the total destruction of the country being struck first could be assured. Depending on force size and posture, and on decapitation.

Still, AJW's notion that under the circumstances he postulated, a first strike by the SU "might not be an irrational act"—since they might suffer only as much destruction, or somewhat less, than in World War II—was itself *insane* for a surprise attack. There is a real, very important and common category of actions that are "rational [in economists' terms] but insane." A Soviet first-strike could *only* appear "rational" if it preempted a certain, imminent US surprise attack (as Andropov feared in 1983): which could only be imagined GIVEN...the US force size, posture, alertness, and cold war policies that the US actually pursued, and which AJW/RAND did nothing to alleviate! (Note what Andropov was actually reacting to! Suppose the false alarms of 1980, or of the Cuban missile crisis, or the Norwegian false alarm of 1997 had occurred in 1983, on the SU side. If Reagan "won," like JFK in 1962, it was because of the real risks of total catastrophe he and JFK had run.

The "rational" approach in the nuclear age could only be to eliminate the basis for such fears (rather than to use them, in crises)—including the likelihood of loss of control--and the readiness to preempt on their basis. Instead, the work of RAND and myself led to policies that mostly exacerbated such fears—see airborne alert, see the first-strike uses of my deterrent plans. See McNamara's efforts to maintain credibility with NATO: putting tac nucs in Europe, moving Jupiters to Turkey, making statements to NATO. See the Ann Arbor speech and the interviews before that, attempting to edge away from city-destroying posture and to undermine the French program. "Edging away" from the apocalypse without educating the public or radically changing the posture only increased risks.]

I tell this woman: "I was just crying about the situation that we (sic) inherited in 1961: plans and full preparations for starting full-scale nuclear war, anywhere in the world we fought Soviet forces." "A war", I said, "that would destroy...not the world... "The world would be fine; in fact, it would be better, without humans to threaten it; but most other species would be gone, with the humans. Actually, there might still be a hundred million humans left...and as Gary Snyder told me, things would be fine, in five thousand years. That's thinking like a Buddhist."

[How did he arrive at that figure? Did he think radioactivity would have died down by then? It wouldn't! It wouldn't take that long for humans to have adapted to the new circumstances.]

"But cities would be gone. Civilization. Our world. It would be a new stone age."

[Fine, in Gary's eyes: better than now. But it would be radioactive: and missing most other fauna. We would have destroyed all the other large mammals: *again*. (There is news this week about the possibility of recreating mammoths, from DNA: after humans, probably, had overhunted them 10,000 years ago.) Not, this time, by hunting them, but by hunting other humans with our latest weapons. The other mammals would be collateral damage (like most of the human victims).

The woman asks: “Is there really a chance of that?” I say, “Oh, yes. It might start with the destruction of Europe, but that would trigger the global destruction.”

[No longer true. Having just read Rhodes, I’m back in the 1980’s, with the Pershing II and the SS-20, which were actually eliminated. What Rhodes doesn’t mention is that this physical destruction was not imitated (at all?) with strategic weapons, to this day.]

I say [correctly]: “The machinery still exists, the doomsday machinery. The race to doomsday. “ [Title: *Racing to Doomsday*.]

Patricia says: “Your title could be *Pro-Life*. That’s what you are.”

A new thought. I say, true. But I’m also for abortion. As “choice.” Choice of whether to allow a foetus to live. Patricia mentions that ----- has talked the other night about our being hard-wired (selected, genetically predisposed) to be collaborative with others—but mainly with our family, our tribe—while fearing and being hostile toward “others,” strangers, with reason: flight or fight. (Wrangham implies that humans have always had reason to fear being hunted, like chimpanzees, by others of our own species in a different tribe, defending or expanding their territory. (Clearly the same species, in our eyes: we don’t eat them, and we know we can cohabit with them and produce fertile human children; in both respects, unlike other “prey.”)

Patricia says, “original sin.” (A better candidate for original sin: Cain killing Abel.) I point out: Did Eve and Adam have a “choice”—i.e., did they “sin”—when it came to being influenced by the snake, being curious? Weren’t they made that way, by their creator (or evolution)? And how about the snake? When was the talking snake created, in the six days? Who created him? And why? Doesn’t the Lord—or evolution—have responsibility for that?

Still, Patricia says, we have a choice. But do we? Patricia says: We have to transcend five million years of evolution. [That’s the period, Wrangham says, since we and the chimpanzees diverged from a common ancestor that, he conjectures, already favored groups of males hunting individuals of a different tribe of their own species.]

Hypothesis: Build trust, cooperation, enlarge the “we.” My book can, she says (rightly, after reading Rhodes) bring out the times this has been tried, the times we have been “close” to it: always, so far, to “fall prey” to counter-forces that enforce the old paradigm of fear and hostility, *readiness to fight*. I can bring out the contrary impulses that could have led to a different present and future if they had been nurtured and borne fruit: Szilard and Rabinowitch, Oppenheimer and Lilienthal, the GAO, the Lilienthal panel, CANDOR, Bulganin, Khrushchev, Eisenhower and the test ban and Stevenson, the new SNIE, JFK after the Missile Crisis, Khrushchev likewise (both deposed), the Gilpatric Committee, the NPT, détente, early Carter [but: Team B, CPD], Gorbachev and the New Way of Thinking, Non-Offensive Defense, Cooperative Security, Reagan at Reykjavik and Gorbachev, INF, Bush in 1991, Gorbachev response (me) (both of them out):

Now...[Theme: always two perspectives in conflict, with the Old Way of Thinking always winning, for economic-political reasons. We're hard-wired to give it the advantage: but not necessarily always.]